



CLOSING THE TABERNACLE: EUROPEAN MADONNA TABERNACLES c. 1150–c. 1350

CERRANDO EL TABERNÁCULO:
RETABLOS-TABERNÁCULO MARIANOS EN EUROPA c. 1150-c. 1350

Elisabeth Andersen
Norsk institutt for kulturminneforskning
elisabeth.andersen@niku.no
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0358-6145>

Received: 10/11/2019 – Accepted: 22/01/2020

Abstract

There are at least twenty-nine Madonna tabernacles from 1150–1350 with one or more wings preserved, most of them in Scandinavia and Spain. These tabernacles housed a sculpture of the Virgin and Child. In the open position, the central sculpture would be revealed, surrounded by scenes from the Incarnation story, depicted in relief, paint, or a combination of both. The aim of this paper is to explore these Madonna tabernacle in its closed position; What decoration and motifs are found on the exteriors? Can a closer examination of the exteriors of these works provide a greater understanding of their function and later development? And, finally, is there a difference between a closed Madonna tabernacle and a closed tabernacle that houses other saints? Most of the surviving tabernacles have wings with monochrome exteriors, often red, but also green and black or a combination of red and green. There are also examples of tabernacles with patterns or foliage. Only six tabernacles have traces of figural decoration on the exterior. Here we find St Peter and St Paul, sometimes together with St John. One tabernacle has the Passion of Christ on the exterior wings. Tabernacles housing saints other than a Madonna figure have also had monochrome exteriors, often red, although several of them, at least in Scandinavia, have lost most of their original color. Only two examples have figural decorations on the exterior and they would probably have had depictions of St Paul and St Peter (both of the tabernacles have only one of the two half-wings preserved with a depiction of St Paul on the exterior, so that St Peter would probably be on the other, lost,

half-wings, see paragraph 'Tabernacles housing other saints'). This leads us to the conclusion that in a closed position there was little that distinguished a Madonna tabernacle from tabernacles housing other saints.

Keywords

Tabernacle, Madonna sculpture, Scandinavia, Middle Ages, wooden sculpture, medieval studies, medieval art, altarpiece, saints.

Resumen

Existen al menos veintinueve retablos-tabernáculo marianos del periodo comprendido entre 1150 y 1350 que conservan uno o más de sus paneles de cierre. La mayoría de ellos se encuentran en Escandinavia y en España. Estos retablos albergaban una imagen de la Virgen con el Niño. Cuando se encontraban abiertos, la escultura central se mostraría rodeada por escenas relativas al misterio de la Encarnación, representadas en relieve, en pintura o en una combinación de ambas técnicas. El propósito de este estudio es indagar cómo eran esos retablos-tabernáculo marianos cuando se encontraban cerrados. ¿Qué decoración y motivos se encontraban en su parte exterior? ¿Podría un estudio más profundo de su exterior proporcionarnos un mejor entendimiento de su función y de su desarrollo posterior? Y, por último, ¿existen diferencias entre los tabernáculos cerrados de tipo mariano y los que albergaron otros santos? La mayoría de los tabernáculos que se conservan tienen paneles de cierre con exteriores monócromos, frecuentemente en rojo, pero también en verde, en negro o en una combinación de rojo y de verde. También hay ejemplos de tabernáculos decorados a base de patrones o a base de motivos vegetales. Solo seis retablos-tabernáculo tienen restos de decoración figurativa en el exterior de sus paneles. En ellos encontramos a San Pedro y a San Pablo, acompañados a veces por San Juan. Uno de ellos muestra en el exterior de sus paneles la pasión de Cristo. Los tabernáculos que cobijan la figura de un santo distinto de la Virgen también presentan exteriores monócromos, a menudo rojos, aunque varios de ellos, al menos en Escandinavia, han perdido gran parte de su color original. Solo dos ejemplos presentan decoración figurativa en el exterior y probablemente en su momento tuvieron representaciones de San Pablo y de San Pedro (los dos conservan solo uno de los paneles que cerraban su frente, donde, en su cara exterior, se representa a San Pablo, por lo que San Pedro se encontraría probablemente en el panel perdido, véase el apartado "Tabernacles housing other saints"). Esto nos lleva a la conclusión de que en posición cerrada había poca diferencia entre un retablo-tabernáculo mariano y aquellos que albergaron otros santos.

Palabras clave

Tabernáculo, imagen de la Virgen con el Niño, Escandinavia, Edad Media, escultura en madera, estudios medievales, arte medieval, retablo, santos.

I. INTRODUCTION

Most medieval wooden sculpture, aside from the special case of rood crosses, was generally placed in altar niches, on pedestals, directly on altars, or in tabernacles.¹ The oldest preserved group of wooden tabernacles dates from c. 1150–c. 1350, but these are scarce, and it is therefore difficult to compile a full understanding of their original appearance and variations. Nevertheless, there are still at least twenty-nine extant Madonna tabernacles in Europe with one or more wings preserved, making them the largest group of pre-1350 preserved wooden tabernacles housing a saint (Andersen 2015).

A Madonna tabernacle is a three-dimensional construction embellished with brilliant color and movable wings, with a figure of the Virgin and Child affixed inside. When the tabernacle is open, the Madonna figure is revealed, with the story of the Incarnation – painted, carved, or in combination – in the niches on the tabernacle's wings. Nearly always when these tabernacles are exhibited in museums or reproduced in print it is their interiors that are displayed or illustrated. The reason is obvious: the sculpture and the decorative wings are on the inside of the tabernacle. Another logical explanation is that there is seemingly nothing of interest on the exteriors, i.e., no figural painting.

The aim of this paper is to explore the Madonna tabernacle in Europe in its closed position. What decoration and motifs are found on the exteriors? Can a closer examination of the exteriors of these works provide a greater understanding of their function and later development? And, finally, is there a difference between a closed Madonna tabernacle and a closed tabernacle that houses other saints?

In Scandinavia (including Iceland and Finland) there are seventeen extant Madonna tabernacles, or fragments of them, with one or more wings preserved. There are also several examples in southern Europe dating from before 1350, with at least nine from Spain and three in Italy.² There are also many Madonna sculp-

¹ *Baldachinaltar* in German, *Retable à baldaquin* in French. See: Norberg, 1969, cols 80–89.

² The material is often fragmented: several pieces have been sold, today in private collections, and/or later rebuilt or lost. It is therefore possible that the number of preserved wings from Italian and Spanish Madonna tabernacles could be more.

tures that are preserved with their original back panel (some with the canopy) but which have lost their doors. These are not included in this study.

I will first present the construction and iconography of Madonna tabernacles. I will then 'close' them and divide them into three groups: exteriors with figural decoration; monochrome exteriors; and exteriors with foliage/pattern decoration. Furthermore, I will discuss parallels between these tabernacle exteriors and Lenten veils, and how the observance of Lent could complicate the celebration of the most important Marian feast day: the Annunciation. This problem was solved in the fourteenth century by altering the exterior decoration of Madonna tabernacles.

2. CONSTRUCTION

A tabernacle consists of seven elements: a plinth on which the sculpture is placed; a back panel; a canopy; and four wings attached by hinges, that is, two side-wings and two half-wings. And some may have had an eighth element: a church-model (Fig. 1). The canopy was intended to rest on four posts and shelter the image of the saint. Around this rectangular space were four wings hinged together, enclosing the sculpture when the tabernacle was closed; and they were often surmounted by a church model, usually with a spire pinnacle. The wider side-wings formed the lateral walls, while the narrower half-wings composed the front of the tabernacle when it was closed. The wings generally terminated at the top in gable forms, often in the shape of trefoils. The wings could be swung to open positions with all four wings – the half-wings plus the side-wings – opened, revealing the Virgin and Child and the interior of the side-wings, decorated with scenes in the niches.

The wings of the tabernacles were composed of one, two, or three butt-jointed vertical oak or pine boards reinforced on the reverse by horizontal battens pegged through the vertical boards. Often the pegged framing had a trefoil profile running around the edge of the reverse side. All extant examples have three tiers on the reverse side except for two, from Hedalen, Norway, and Nässinge, Sweden, which have four tiers.³ Each tabernacle would have had eight, twelve, or eighteen trefoil or arched niches on the interior of the half- and side-wings. Those from southern Europe would originally have had two or three tiers, and eight

³ See table at the end of this article for information about the Madonna tabernacles discussed here: date, location, size, number of preserved wings, material, and exterior decoration.

or twelve trefoil, cinquefoil, or squared niches. The niches were divided by horizontal battens and architectural or foliage decorations. The scenes in the niches were executed in wooden relief figures (Fig. 2), or painted, or created through a combination of painting and relief.

The back panel had a canopy that could be flat, arched, or angular. The top of the canopy could have carved crenellations or gables. The sides of the canopy were often carved as trefoils or rounded arches (or a combination). The Madonna figure, sitting on a throne with a plinth underneath her feet, was nailed to the back panel.

For many tabernacles in Scandinavia the uppermost component has survived, which had the form of a church, as seen in Hedalen, Reinli, and Urnes in Norway, and Norra Ny in Sweden, but there are also church-form canopies preserved where the tabernacles are lost, such as those from Borgund, Kinsarvik, and Tuft in Norway. Most of these were once thought to be tabernacles for storing the host, but a study by Bernt C. Lange has shed new light on the tabernacles' appearance. Lange suggests that the five well-preserved Norwegian wooden church models from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Reinli, Hedalen, Borgund, Kinsarvik, and Tuft) were not made for housing the host as a 'sacrament-house', but were the crowning architectural feature on Madonna tabernacles (Lange, 1994, pp. 23–36).

The overall sizes of these tabernacles were from *c.* 1.4 m. to over 2 m., and even higher if they were capped by a church-model, which could measure up to 1.5 m. In the open position, they would be wider in proportion to their height.

3. ICONOGRAPHY

Madonna tabernacles and Madonna frontals, as well as small-scale ivories in the form of triptychs or polyptychs, share common features of composition and iconography, but, of course, they did not necessarily have the same function. In the extant wings from Scandinavia, there is little variation in terms of the scenes included in the decoration as well as their placement in the wings. Regarding the order of the scenes, it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions given that so many reliefs are lost, and the preserved reliefs have often been replaced into positions they didn't originally fill.⁴

⁴ For example, in the tabernacles from Fröskog (Sweden), Yurre (Spain), and Marès I altarpiece (Spain). The latter has reliefs that did not originally belong to it, see Melero Moneo, 1991, pp. 432–433.

In some of the southern European tabernacles, however, there is greater variety and several additional scenes (Andersen, 2015, pp. 170–171). At least two scenes were always included in the story of the Incarnation: the Annunciation, often followed by the Visitation and the Adoration of the Magi. The first scene had a fixed place in the composition, at the bottom, on the right side, near the foot of the Madonna sculpture. The other most common scenes included are the Annunciation to the Shepherds, the Nativity, and the Presentation in the Temple. In addition, there is the occasional inclusion of the Flight into Egypt, Joseph's dream, and the Massacre of the Innocents. In tabernacles from Italy and Spain can be found the Dream of the Three Magi, the Magi questioning Herod, Herod's feast, the Baptism of Christ, the Death of the Virgin, and the Coronation of the Virgin, none of which is present in the tabernacles from Scandinavia. What is interesting is that there are no traces of scenes from the Childhood of the Virgin or the Miracles of the Virgin on the tabernacles' wings, as are commonly included on other works such as altar frontals.

4. FIGURAL PAINTING ON EXTERIORS

Tabernacles dating from the second half of the fourteenth century and forward usually have figural paintings on the exterior. Often a representation of the Annunciation appeared on the exterior of the half-wings, forming the front of the tabernacle when closed. Later, during the fifteenth century, painted saints started to appear on the exteriors. Tabernacles preserved from c. 1150–c. 1350, on the other hand, seldom have traces of figures on the exterior; most of them have monochrome exteriors. A closer examination shows that only six of the twenty-nine pre-1350 Madonna tabernacles – two from Norway and four from Spain – have figural painting, or traces of figures, on the exterior. Of these, all represent St Peter, St Paul, or St John the Evangelist save one, which portrays the Passion of Christ.

4.1. *St Peter and St Paul*

Four out of the six tabernacles with painted figures on the exterior depict St Peter and/or St Paul, who were the two pillars of the church, *principes apostolorum*. St Peter, whose symbol is one or two keys, declared Jesus to be the Messiah, was appointed by God to be the foundation of the Church, and was given the key to

heaven (Matthew 16: 13–19). Paul brought the Gospel to the Gentiles, after he had converted and become a well-known missionary. Both died as martyrs on the same day. Paul was beheaded in Rome, hence his attribute the sword. The two saints, who are often depicted together, flank Christ in *Traditio Legis*, or Christ Enthroned images, and they can be seen accompanying other figures and scenes such as the Madonna, the Transfiguration, the Man of Sorrows, and the Coronation of the Virgin. They are also on altar frontals, for example, in Kinsarvik, Norway, on either side of Christ in the Crucifixion,⁵ or on the Barnabas altarpiece, flanking an enthroned Maria Lactans.⁶ On the murals in Birkerød Church, Denmark, St Peter and St Paul are in attendance at the Coronation of the Virgin.⁷

The tabernacle from Fåberg, Norway, has one side-wing preserved: the left wing, once hinged to the tabernacle's back and closing to cover its side (Fig. 3). On the exterior, St Peter stands facing frontally, holding up two keys in his right hand and a book in his left. The apostle is tonsured and his hair and beard are short and curly. He is dressed in a white belted tunic patterned with small triplets of orange dots (Kollandsrud, 2018, pp. 231–232; Binski/Sauerberg, 2006, pp. 230–244; Blindheim, 2004, p. 114). His mantle is yellow, dulled today towards gray, and he is presented against a red background. The figure fills the length of the door and is framed by horizontal bands of acanthus vine along the top and bottom. One can assume that the Fåberg tabernacle had St Paul as a pendant on the other side-wing. Unfortunately, it is not possible to say what would have been the motifs on the half-wings.

The two preserved wings of the Sant Martí Sarroca tabernacle depict St Peter on one half-wing and St Paul on the other, and thus they faced each other when the wings were closed (Fig. 4 Velasco González, in this volume). They are both dressed in white tunics and green cloaks on a red background. St Peter holds a double key in his right hand and a book in the other. The pigment describing his

⁵ Today in the University Museum of Bergen (BM MA 10), Norway.

⁶ Today at Kimbell Art Museum, Texas, USA.

⁷ Often in representations of St Peter and St Paul, where they are flanking a scene, St Peter is seen on the left and St Paul on the right. On tabernacles there are variations. On the preserved wings, St Peter and St Paul are painted on the half-wings, composing the front of the tabernacle when it was closed. The figures are painted in profile or half-profile, facing each other, as seen in the examples from Sant Martí Sarroca, Arana I, and the so-called 'Chiale altarpiece'. On Arana I, Peter is on the right side and Paul on the left, as on the wing from Sant Martí Sarroca. On the Chiale altarpiece, Paul is on the right and Peter is on the left, as is their more common placement, such as on frontals.

head is fragmented but his eyes are still visible, looking to his right, half facing the viewer. Traces of his curly beard are still preserved. St Paul, standing to the left, has a sword in his right hand and his left hand is effaced, but clearly it was raised; perhaps he was holding a book or pointing his finger. Sections of his long, straight hair and beard are still visible.

The four wings of the Spanish tabernacle Arana I were taken apart and reused in several eighteenth-century altarpieces,⁸ today in Treviño, Spain, in the Church of St Peter (Gutiérrez Baños, 2018, pp. 64–68). The exteriors of the four wings were painted over once with a red background decorated with stars. This layer of paint was later removed. Today the exterior of the medieval tabernacle constitutes the back of the altarpieces, and therefore these panels are not visible to the viewer. The two half-wings once composing the front of a Madonna tabernacle when closed have paintings of St Peter and St Paul (Fig. 4). One of the side-wings portrays John the Evangelist. The paint on the fourth side-wing has vanished. St Peter is in three-quarter profile, looking to his right towards St Paul on the other half-wing. His beard is short and curly as is his tonsured hair. He holds one large key in his right hand and a book in the other. St Paul, facing the opposite direction, towards St Peter, holds his attribute, a sword, in his left hand and a book in the other. Both saints are dressed in blue robes and red mantles and are set against a yellow background.

Another Madonna tabernacle from Spain, the so-called ‘Chiale altarpiece’,⁹ today kept at Killua Castle, Ireland, has all four wings preserved (Mor, 2016) (Fig. 5). The exteriors of the side wings are red, decorated with a lighter red pattern of dots. The half-wings, composing the front when closed, have figural decoration. The paint on the left half-wing is very damaged, with only traces of the figure’s blue mantle and red cloak remaining. The image on the other half-wing is also fragmented, but the upper part of the figure is preserved and portrays St Paul, who is presented in profile, looking towards the vanished saint on the other half-wing, who was probably St Peter. St Paul is dressed in a red mantle and blue cloak and wields a sword in his right hand and points upwards with the other. Both figures on the half-wings are set against a yellow background.

⁸ In two altarpieces and in a sacrament box for the main altarpiece.

⁹ Chiale is an Italian surname designating the art dealer based in Racconigi and Brussels who brought this altarpiece to light in 2016.

4.2. *St John*

As mentioned above, a side-wing from the Arana I tabernacle portrays John the Evangelist (Fig. 6). Like St Peter and St Paul from the same tabernacle, he is dressed in a blue tunic and red cloak. St John's hair is long and curly, and he is beardless. St John is typically represented in art as a beautiful, young, beardless man, with the poisoned cup or a book in his hand.¹⁰ St John from Arana I holds an open book in his left hand, and his right hand is raised, with one finger pointing towards the book. This panel was probably the left side-wing (Gutiérrez Baños, 2018, p. 67).

The tabernacle from Urnes, Norway, has a preserved left side-wing.¹¹ It has lost significant amounts of paint, with only traces of pigment on the interior and exterior. The figure on the exterior is very damaged (Fig. 6), but it is still possible to detect a beardless face and part of a raised arm, set against a red background. The hand is very fragmented, but there is a pointing finger. Blindheim suggests that the figure depicts an angel (Blindheim, 1993; 1998, p. 61). However, a closer study of the painting shows that what Blindheim assumed were the angel's wings are, in fact, part of a frame that runs around the side-wing. It could be this is also St John, as seen in Arana I. A comparison of these two wings reveals similarities in pose: they both face in the same direction, and both have the same pointing finger and beardless face.

This side-wing from Urnes reveals further close stylistic connections between tabernacles from Norway and Spain. It is the only preserved tabernacle wing in Scandinavia that has a combination of painted and carved figural scenes on the interior. The upper tier has painted figures, such as the angels in the upper gable and traces of an angel (Gabriel) in one of the niches. The lower tier has probably had carved figures; one magus is preserved that fits the side-wing from Urnes.¹² A Spanish tabernacle, from Vallbona de les Monges, also has this same combination on the interior. And we can assume that it was not only a single wing on the Urnes tabernacle that was decorated with a figure on its exterior, but that there

¹⁰ St John belonged to the inner circle of Jesus' disciples; and on the cross, Jesus gave his mother into John's care. John was the first apostle brought to the dying Mary.

¹¹ The Urnes tabernacle also had an identical half-wing; this was still in the church in 1953, but lost by 1955. Published drawings by Blix of the half-wing and the roof of the church-model exist (Blix, 1895, p. 17, fig. 10), but they do not provide any information about the exterior.

¹² Thanks to Stephan Kuhn and Justin Kroesen for this information.

was a matching, pendant, figure on the other side-wing, or, like the Spanish tabernacle of Arana I, that all four wings had figural decoration.

4.3. *The Passion of Christ*

The last of these six examples of tabernacles with figures on the exterior is also the most elaborately decorated: the three wings from the Spanish Madonna tabernacle, called Wildenstein altarpiece (Gutiérrez Baños, 2018), today in the Met Cloisters Museum in New York (Fig. 7).¹³ The interior, now lost, displayed figures in relief against a gold ground. The edges of the gabled exterior panels bear the arms of Castile and León, and the three wings are decorated with scenes from the Life of Christ. The scenes of the side-wing are (top to bottom): the Betrayal of Christ and the Payment of Judas; Christ's Descent into Limbo and *Noli Me Tangere* combined in one scene, together with Mary Magdalene kissing Christ's feet. The right half-wing (top to bottom): Disrobing Youths from the Entry into Jerusalem; the Flagellation; and Angel at the Sepulchre. The other half-wing: the Deposition; and the Entombment, with Nicodemus, Mary, and St John. The painted figures are dressed in alternating red and blue tunics and cloaks and set against a yellow background.

5. MONOCHROME EXTERIORS

Even if the decoration on the various Madonna tabernacles are damaged or have been painted over, or the wings have been reconstructed, we often find original paint preserved on the exterior of the wings. A closer examination of the exteriors of these European Madonna tabernacles shows that the majority have had monochrome exteriors, often in red, green, or black, sometimes with a decoration of foliage or patterns.

In Oppland County, Norway, there are two neighboring stave churches, Hedalen and Reinli, with two altarpieces composed of a medieval corpus of a tabernacle that once housed a Madonna figure. The pair are very good examples of the appearance of these early tabernacles when closed, because they both have

¹³ Two of the panels were purchased in 1955 (accession number 55.62a,b), and the third panel was a bequest from Carl Otto von Kienbusch in 1977. See: Baetjer, 1995, p. 146.

all four wings preserved. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they were both remodeled and painted over, but the exteriors of the wings, today the backs of the altarpieces, were not (Andersen, 2015, pp. 165–185). In the middle of the eighteenth century the Hedalen tabernacle was remodeled to become an altarpiece consisting of a medieval crucifix attached to the overpainted corpus of the tabernacle. The Madonna figure and the church-model that once sat atop the tabernacle were placed elsewhere in the church. The figures previously positioned in the niches are today lost. The interior has been covered with ‘rose-painting’, but the wings have their original paint preserved on the exterior (Fig. 8). Red and green sections on the wings create a checkerboard pattern in all six squares (two half-squares in the half-wings form two squares when closed), and, additionally, the spaces within the trefoils at the top of the wings alternate red and green (Stein, 2010, pp. 58–91; Andersen 2015, pp. 165–185) (Fig. 10).

The altarpiece in Reinli was originally the corpus of a medieval Madonna tabernacle (of the same shape as Hedalen’s). In the late nineteenth century, the two half-wings were placed side by side to form the middle section of the altarpiece, and the side-wings were made into the side sections of the new composition. The Ascension of Christ was painted on the middle section of the interior in the 1890s and scenes from the Old and New Testaments were added in the side sections in the 1920s. The back panel of the tabernacle was still in the church in 1885, but was later removed, probably already during the restoration of the church in the late 1880s. The church model that once surmounted the tabernacle was sent to the University Museum of Bergen in the 1870s. The exterior of the tabernacle is still preserved in its original condition, with the half-wings green and the side-wings red (Fig. 9). When closed, the half-wings in front of the tabernacle would have been green and the side-wings red (Stein, 2010, pp. 58–91; Andersen 2015, pp. 165–185) (Fig. 10).

For some tabernacles all four wings were decorated in a single color. There are multiple examples that support this conclusion. The Madonna tabernacle from Fröskog, Sweden, has three preserved wings. Today the outsides of them are red with white foliage, but the foliage seems to have been added later, perhaps in connection with the re-painting of the interior in the eighteenth century. (Fig. 11). There are traces of later renovations that have the same foliage pattern, which indicates that the exterior of all four wings was initially red. Other examples in Sweden are found at Östra Vram Church, where there are two tabernacles, one with a central Madonna figure and the other with a St Olaf figure. The Madonna tabernacle has three extant wings, and while the interior has been painted over, the exterior retains its original color: red (Fig. 11). Also, at Näss-

inge, Sweden, there are two preserved wings that were originally red.¹⁴ Outside of Sweden, there are examples in the north: the tabernacle from Múli, Iceland, has four wings painted red.¹⁵ And in the south, in Spain, we find the same: the four wings of the tabernacle from Vallbona de les Monges are all red (Fig. 11). And there are further instances of wings from Spain and Scandinavia that are red or have traces of red.¹⁶

In addition to red exteriors, we also find wings painted green or dark green or black. The Madonna tabernacle in Norra Ny Church, Sweden, has one preserved half-wing (Fig. 12).¹⁷ The polychrome on the interior is probably from the fifteenth century, and the exterior is in a dark (black?) color. Another Spanish tabernacle with all four wings preserved is that of Castildelgado in Burgos, today exhibited at the Museu Frederic Marès, Barcelona (Fig. 12). The interior has been painted over and gilded, while the exteriors of the four wings have been preserved in what appears to be the original black paint. The tabernacle from Urjala, Finland, has three preserved wings that are also covered in a dark color (black?) (Fig. 12).¹⁸

6. FOLIAGE AND PATTERN DECORATION

Some wings have foliage or patterns painted on the exterior. A number of these decorations could be secondary additions, but others are harder to determine and need technical examination by a conservator. It is possible that in the case of a preserved left side-wing from a tabernacle in Røldal II,¹⁹ decorated with a red background and yellow foliage, that the foliage was part of the original ornamentation (Fig. 13). Foliage decorations can be found incised on the golden

¹⁴ Foliage patterns, as stencils, were later added to the wings. See in this paper 'Foliage and Pattern Decoration'.

¹⁵ According to a conservation report from 1956 (N. J. Termanen), there are some traces of ornament with a thin glaze; this need to be further examined.

¹⁶ One wing from Marès I altarpiece, Spain; one wing from Fet, Norway.

¹⁷ In 1928 one other half-wing was reconstructed.

¹⁸ Most of the exteriors of these tabernacles have not been thoroughly examined by conservators.

¹⁹ Røldal II is in some publications referred to as 'Odda' (Kollandsrud, 2018, p. 230; Plahter *et alii*, 2004, p. 198), without explanation. When it arrived at Bergen Museum it was written that it was from Røldal church. A lot of inventory was labeled 'Røldal' and may not all be from the same church, but as long as there is, to my knowledge, no indication why it may be from Odda, I choose to refer to it as 'Røldal II'.

background of the figures scenes as well as painted or carved on the upper part of the niches, above the trefoil gable, on the interior. A preserved fragment from a canopy from Eidsborg, Norway, also displays this kind of foliage decoration (Kollandsrud, 2018, p. 230).²⁰

The only extant wings, a half-wing and a side-wing, from a Madonna tabernacle with a pattern on the exterior are from Røldal I, Norway, but the half-wing has lost all its paint. The side-wing, however, has a zigzag pattern on the exterior (Fig. 13). The painting technique consists of 'daubs' in red and yellow on a black background. Perhaps it suggests a pattern of woven fabrics.

7. ALTERED EXTERIORS

7.1. *Later overpainted exteriors*

The non-figural exterior of tabernacles has seldom been scrutinized, and when works are restored, the exteriors are often left untouched or unexamined.

Only a handful of tabernacle wings have been painted over, either during the late Middle Ages or in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. And only one known example has later been painted with figural decoration on the exterior: the Madonna tabernacle from Aosta, Italy (Rossetti Brezzi, 2001, p. 40). It has all four wings preserved, and in 1510–1520 they were re-painted with the Annunciation scene in front (when closed, thus on the backs of the half-wings) and two saint bishops on backs of the side-wings. The surface of the two wings on the left side have since been destroyed.

The Madonna tabernacle from Nässjö, Sweden, today has only one original wing preserved, with one relief figure: one of the Three Magi. The interior of the wing has lost its original niches and only fragments of initial paint are preserved. Both the Madonna figure and the wing were remodeled during the sixteenth century, and later they were integrated into a new tabernacle along with the preserved medieval wing on the left side and a new wing on the right side. On the exterior of the medieval wing there are traces of foliage decoration, maybe from the remodeling of the tabernacle in the sixteenth century, or they could be later painted additions, possibly from the seventeenth century. The same light green

²⁰ Madonna tabernacles from the middle of the fourteenth century through the sixteenth often have foliage decoration on side-wings, while the half-wings could have the Annunciation scene.

color is also painted over the original decorated niches in the interior. Traces of red pigment under the light green overpaint suggest that the wing once was red or partly red.²¹

Two tabernacles have later been decorated with a painted pattern of flowers (stencil): The tabernacles in Yurre, Álava, Spain, and in Nässinge, Sweden (Fig. 14). The tabernacle from Yurre has small blue flowers patterned on a red ground. The examples from Nässinge have red-orange flowers/leaves patterned on a brownish-red background. As mentioned above, foliage decoration was subsequently added to the Fröskog tabernacle. Because there are no conservation reports regarding the examination of the original pigments, one can presume that the tabernacles would have been monochrome, at least the two from Fröskog and Nässinge.

7.2. *Lost colors*

There is also a group of tabernacles that has lost most or all of their color on the exterior of the wings. Tabernacles from Jällby, Sweden, and Kumlinge in Finland are such examples, as is a wing from the so-called 'Marès I altarpiece' (Gutiérrez Baños, 2018), currently in the Museu Frederic Marès of Barcelona (Fig. 15).²²

Some tabernacles have traces of color that may suggest that there has been a pattern or foliage, such as those in Jällby and Svinhult, Sweden (Fig. 16).²³ The colors that are found on the fragments are red, green, or black, that is, the same colors found on the monochrome wings with preserved surfaces. None of these fragments are traces of figures.

For a tabernacle from Vojňany, Slovakia, it is uncertain which saint it originally housed.²⁴ It has been suggested that it held a Madonna sculpture (Buran/Müllerová, eds, 2008, p. 1) (Fig. 16). This tabernacle differs from others of the same 1150–1350 period when opened. Rather than depicting scenes of the saint's life on the interior, it offers four figures: St Peter and St Paul on the half wings, and two saints with uncertain identification on the side wings. One figure may be St John pointing towards the central saint sculpture. The other figure holds

²¹ This need to be confirmed through a chemical analysis of paint samples.

²² These have traces of ground and/or small pigments that shows that the wings once have been painted.

²³ It is unclear, though, if the foliage was a later addition.

²⁴ Today at Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava.

what seems to be a red piece of fruit or a globe in his/her left hand and a palm branch in the other. The exterior of the wings (visible when the tabernacle is closed) have lost all of their pigment. This last tabernacle may indicate that some tabernacles never have had paintings on the exterior?²⁵

8. TABERNACLES HOUSING OTHER SAINTS

In Scandinavia, surprisingly the only examples of preserved wings from tabernacles dedicated to saints other than the Madonna are in Sweden (dating *c.* 1150–*c.* 1350). Three of the tabernacles housed the famous Norwegian saint King Olaf and two tabernacles a bishop saint.

In Östra Vram Church there are two tabernacles, as mentioned above, one of them with a Madonna figure and the other St Olaf. The St Olaf tabernacle has two preserved wings: one half-wing with traces of red paint; and one side-wing, where the exterior is red. From Berg Church, today at Historiska Museet in Stockholm, there are four wings that once were part of a St Olaf tabernacle. The exterior of these wings has also lost its original paint, save some small fragments of red on a white priming. The third St Olaf tabernacle is in Dädesjö Old Church; all four wings are extant, but all traces of color on the exterior are gone (Fig. 17).

One of the two bishop tabernacles is from Edestad Church but today is kept in the Blekinge Museum. It has one preserved side-wing, the exterior of which has traces of red foliage on a white background (Fig. 17). The tabernacle in Närke's Kil Church has one preserved side-wing with no remaining pigment on the exterior.

There are several examples of Spanish tabernacles housing various saints that have had monochrome exteriors; most of them had red wings, or decorations of diamond-shape patterns (Fig. 17), as Alberto Velasco explains in his article in this publication.

Nevertheless, there are remnants of at least two Castilian tabernacles with figural paintings on the exterior: 'Haupt I and II', presently in the National Museum in Warsaw, that have figural paintings on their preserved wings (Ratkowska, 1970, pp. 1–18; Dobrzeniecki, 1977, pp. 335–338, no 115). Haupt I is dedicated

²⁵ As Fernando Gutiérrez Baños made me aware of is the case of a Castilian hagiographical tabernacle in Covarrubias.

to St John the Baptist and has three preserved wings; Two side-wings and one half-wing. The half-wing once composing the left side of the tabernacle when closed has a depiction of St Paul on the exterior, probably facing St Peter on the now lost right half-wing. The Haupt II tabernacle, belonging to an unidentified saint, only has one wing preserved, the left half-wing, also with the depiction of St Paul.

What is interesting is that tabernacles housing saints from this period, have either monochrome exteriors, often red, or representations of St Paul (and St Peter). This means that in a closed position there was little that distinguished the tabernacles from each other, as demonstrated by the two tabernacles in Östra Vram. When the tabernacles of St Olaf and Madonna were closed, they would have probably looked nearly identical: red wings with a red-and-green canopy with crenelation.²⁶

9. CLOSED TABERNACLES AS A VISUAL 'FASTING'

We know little about the use of these early tabernacles within their churches. What we can assume is that, at a minimum, they were opened on major feast days, such as Epiphany, Easter Sunday, Pentecost, Ascension, Trinity Sunday, All Saints' Day, and the Feast of Corpus Christi (Kaspersen, 2003, pp. 39–41). During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, devotion to the Virgin Mary intensified and more Marian feast days were introduced, and as a result the tabernacles were likely open during these days as well.

We can also assume that tabernacles were closed during Lent, a period during which altars, tabernacles, and images were covered with cloths.²⁷ Veiling sacred images gave material expression to the somber mood of penance and mourning that characterized Lent. Lenten veils were known in medieval times as *velum quadragesimale*, or the 'veil of 40 days', and were later called *Fastentuch* or *Hungertuch* in German-speaking regions (Hotchin, 2018). There were liturgical regulations in the thirteenth century for covering all ornaments, panels, and sculptures in a church. For instance, in William Durandus's *Rationale* of 1286 it is written:

²⁶ The canopy of the Madonna tabernacle is today constructed with parts of two tabernacles. It is the left side that is the original.

²⁷ For further information about the act of concealing with cloths, see Wallem, 1910, pp. 25–28.

Now all things which pertain to the ornament of a church must be removed or covered over in the season of Lent: which according to some taketh place on Passion Sunday, because after that time the Divinity of Christ was hidden and concealed in Him. [...] Others do this the first Sunday of Lent (Smith, 1959, p. 47).

White linen was often used for the veils that covered crosses, images, reliquaries, etc., but there were also those made of silk. And there are descriptions of Lenten veils that deviate from white cloth with red crosses, especially in English documents, where they are recorded as red or black cloths.²⁸ And according to Durandus, four colors were used in church hangings: white, red, black, and green (Neale/Webb, eds, 1893, Appendix E, pp. 189–195): a white curtain representing pureness of living; red for charity; green for contemplation; and black for mortification of the flesh, a livid-colored tribulation (Neale/Webb, eds, 1893, pp. 64–65). It seems that during Lent there were a variety of visual expressions. Many of the Lenten cloths had decorations embroidered on them in printed patterns, such as foliage, or red crosses; more exclusive cloths could have various scenes from the Passion of Christ, as were popular in the late medieval period (Braun, 1924, p. 233). One example of an exceptional altar cloth used during Lent is the *Narbonne Altar Cloth* made for King Charles V in 1364 (Fig. 18).²⁹ On it are scenes from the Passion: the Kiss of Judas, the Flagellation, the Carrying of the Cross, the Entombment, the Descent into Limbo and Noli Me Tangere – some of which are also found on the exterior of the Spanish Madonna tabernacle in New York (Fig. 19).

The exteriors of tabernacle wings, with their monochrome matte surfaces, often applied in red, green or black water-based paint (Kollandsrud, 2018, p. 229), create an illusion of Lenten cloths and could be understood as a form of visual ‘fasting’.

The contrast of the open and closed tabernacle would be as great at the removal of the cloths on Easter Sunday; the opening of the wings of the tabernacle enabled the priest to perform the ‘tearing of the veil’ on feast days (e.g., compare the Castildelgado tabernacle closed, Fig. 12, left, and open, Fig. 11 Gutiérrez Baños, in this volume).

²⁸ I am grateful for information about Lenten veils from Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth, Ph.D. Candidate, ‘Wrapping the Sacred: A Study of the Materiality and Religious Significance of Ecclesiastical Textiles from Late Medieval Scandinavia, c. 1400–1550’, Institutt for kunst- og medievitenskap, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, NTNU, Trondheim, Norway.

²⁹ Today in the Louvre, Paris. Gray wash on fluted silk imitating samite. H. 0.78 m.; W. 2.08 m. (MI 1121).

As the hanging and removing of Lenten veils signaled the start or conclusion of a period of penance, grief, and mourning, the dramatic lifting of the sanctuary veil contributed to expressions of awe and hope in anticipation of Christ's triumph over death. And the same effect could have been achieved by opening a closed tabernacle.

9.1. *Feast of the Annunciation*

The veiling of objects or the closing of the tabernacles during Lent could cause a problem for the most important Marian feast day, the Annunciation. This day is celebrated on March 25, which falls during Lent or, on rare occasions, the early days of Easter week.³⁰

A manuscript by Adam of Orlando in the ordinances of the Cathedral Notre-Dame de Laon dating from the late twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century says that the *tabule altaris* were opened or revealed only on feast days, except on the annual feast of the Annunciation (Smith, 1959, p. 45). The reason for this must have been that the Annunciation celebration fell during Lent. No wings were to be opened, nor covers removed; the only act of veneration allowed was the lighting a candle in front of the tabernacle. This complication regarding the celebration of the most important Marian feast day was solved in some churches by switching the veiling cloth with one that was decorated with Gabriel and the Virgin Mary, either in paint or embroidery (Kaspersen, 2003, p. 40). At the end of thirteenth century it appears that in France an exception was made to rules governing bans on ecclesiastical decoration during Lent, and gradually the feast of the Annunciation was again celebrated (Smith, 1959, p. 49). The Sarum rites allowed two exceptions: the Virgin on the main altar, which was unveiled only to celebrate the feast of the Annunciation; and the principal crosses in the church, unveiled on Palm Sunday (Smith, 1959, p. 47).

³⁰ 'Feast of the Annunciation' was solved in a different way in Spain: since the Late Antiquity, the feast of the Annunciation was transferred to the 18th of December. Maybe this explains why there are no Spanish Madonna tabernacles with the Annunciation on the exterior of the half-wings? The exception is one Castilian example (the Suma II altarpiece, from the second half of the fourteenth century), but it is uncertain if the Annunciation corresponds to the time these panels were part of a tabernacle-altarpiece or to a later re-use of the panels. I thank Fernando Gutiérrez Baños for bringing this to my attention.

From the middle of the fourteenth century we can trace a change in several Madonna tabernacles (Fig. 20). On the exterior of the half-wings, which create the front when the tabernacle is closed, the angel Gabriel and the Virgin are depicted in an Annunciation scene. This could be a solution to the Annunciation day problem: by removing the Lenten cloth, the Annunciation would be visible, but the tabernacle would remain closed.³¹

10. CONCLUSION

There are at least twenty-nine Madonna tabernacles from 1150–1350 with one or more wings preserved, most of them in Scandinavia and Spain. These tabernacles housed a sculpture of the Virgin and Child. In the open position, the central sculpture would be revealed, surrounded by scenes from the Incarnation story and, in Spanish and Italian tabernacles, some additional scenes depicted in relief, paint, or a combination of both.

The tabernacles' original shapes and intended locations and purposes are for the most part lost today. The decorations on the works are damaged, often painted over, or remodeled. But the exteriors of these tabernacles, the wings, frequently retain their original colors (or traces of them), indicating that in addition to the many monochrome surfaces, they were decorated with figures or patterns. Only six tabernacles have traces of figural decoration on the exterior. Here we find St Peter and St Paul, sometimes together with St John. Obviously, there must also have been variations unknown today, owing to the small number of works preserved and the lack of written sources describing the appearance of tabernacles from this period. One tabernacle with the Passion of Christ on the exterior wings offers an example of how elaborate the decorations could have been. But most of the surviving tabernacles have wings with monochrome surfaces, often red, but also green and black or a combination of red and green. There are also examples of tabernacles with patterns or foliage.

Tabernacles housing saints other than the Madonna have often no preserved traces of figural decorations. Most of these wings were red, although several of them, at least in Scandinavia, have lost their original color. The few

³¹ From the second half of the fourteenth century, decoration – figural and non-figural – was more common on the exterior of Madonna tabernacles, so one can assume that these works would have been covered during Lent.

examples that are preserved with figural decoration on the exterior have St Paul on one half-wing, whereas the other is lost; although we can assume it would have had St Peter. This leads us to the conclusion that in a closed position there was little that distinguished a Madonna tabernacle from tabernacles housing other saints.

When the tabernacles were closed, they hid and sheltered the image of a saint. As Lenten veils concealed objects during Easter, the four wings of the tabernacle hid the Madonna figure or other saint. And the contrast between the open and closed positions would have nearly the same effect as the 'tearing of the veil' on Easter Sunday. When the monochrome and matte surfaces on the exterior of the tabernacle were swung open, the figure of the Virgin and Child was revealed in bright colors and gold leaf, surrounded by niches filled with painted or carved scenes, embellished with colors and shining metals.

Opening the tabernacle wings must have been a great revelation and a moving event within medieval devotional experiences (Fig. 21).

II. MADONNA TABERNACLES c. 1150–c. 1350

Madonna tabernacles c. 1150–c. 1350						
Located in the churches, except when a museum location is indicated						
	Region	Date	Location	Size	Material	Exterior
Norway						
Fet (one wing)	Sogn og Fjordane	c.1275–1300	Universitetsmuseet, Bergen MA 219	H: 0.615 m W: 0.22 m	Pine (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>)	Red
Fåberg (one wing)	Oppland	c.1250	Universitetet i Oslo, Kulturhistorisk museum, Oslo C 3006	H: 1.84 m W: 0.74 m	Oak	Figure (St Peter) on a red background
Hedalen (four wings)	Oppland	c.1250–1275		H: 1.60 m W: 0.52/0.32 m	Oak	Red and green
Reinli (four wings)	Oppland	c.1250–1275		H: 1.96 m W (all four wings): 2.58 m	Pine?	Red and green
Røldal I (two wings)	Hordaland	c.1250	Universitetsmuseet, Bergen MA 297a-b	H: 1.42 m W: 0.39 m	Pine	Red and green zigzag on a black? background

Røldal II (one wing)	Hordaland	c.1250–1300	Universitetsmuseet, Bergen MA 512	H: 1.14 m W: 0.36 (0.42) m	Not identified	Yellow foliage on a red background
Urnes (one wing)	Sogn og Fjordane	c.1150–1200	Universitetsmuseet, Bergen MA 510	H: 1.29 m W: 0.45 m	Oak	Figure (St John?) on a red background
Sweden						
Fröskog (three wings)	Västergötland	c.1250–1275	Historiska museet, Stockholm SHM 14965	H: 1.70 m (wings: 1.42m) W: 0.45/ 0.41/0.27 m	Oak	Red (with secondary light [white?] foliage)
Jällby (four wings)	Västergötland	c.1250–1275		H: 0.90 m W: 0.29 m	Oak	Lost (fragments of red, patterns?)
Norra Ny (one wing)	Värmland	c.1250–1275		H: 1.71 m / 1.31 m W: 0.29 m	Not identified	Dark (black?)
Nässinge (two wings)	Bohuslän	c.1250–1275	Göteborgs stadsmuseum, Gothenburg GM 173	H: 1.43 m	Oak	Red (with secondary stencils)
Nässjö (one wing)	Småland	c.1250–1275?		H: 1.36 m W: 0.36 m		Traces of secondary foliage/leaves
Svinhult (two wings)	Östergötland	c. 1250		H: 1.22 m / 1.18 m W: 0.30/0.23 m		Lost (traces of foliage of unknown date)
Östra Vram (three wings)	Skåne	c.1300		H: 1.04 m W: 0.62 m	Oak	Red
Finland						
Kumlinge (four wings)	Åland	c.1250–1275		H: 1.19 m	Oak	Original colors lost. Red
Urkjala (Urdiala) (three wings)	Birkaland	c.1250	Kansallismuseo, Helsinki KM 4563:1	H: 1.18 m	Poplar?	Dark (black?)

Iceland						
Múli (four wings)		c.1275–1300	Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen 19014	H: 1.40/1.45 m W: 0.52 m	Pine (newer details in oak)	Red with traces of ornamentation
Italy						
Alatri (four wings)	Lazio	c.1250		H: 1.57 m W: 0.44/0.55 m	Beech	Overpainted in 1745
Aosta (four wings)	Aosta Valley	c.1300–1350	Museo Civico, Turin	H: 1.00 m W (all four wings): 2.64 m	Not identified	Overpainted in 1510–1520
Pale di Foligno (six fragments from four wings)	Umbria	c.1320–1330	Museo Diocesano, Foligno	H: 1.47 m	Not identified	Not identified
Spain						
Arana I (four wings, but fragmented and incomplete)	Castile-León	c.1275–1300	Church of St Peter, Treviño		Not identified	Figures (St Peter, St Paul and St John) on a yellow background
Castildelgo (four wings)	Castile-León	c.1300–1350	Museu Frederic Marès, Barcelona MFMB 814	H: 2.08 m W (all four wings): 2.22 m	Not identified	Black
Sant Martí Sarroca (two wings)	Catalonia	c.1275–1300	Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona MNAC 15924, 15925		Not identified	Figures (St Peter and St Paul)
Vallbona de les Monges (four wings)	Catalonia	c.1335–1350	Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona MNAC/MAC 9780, 9781, 9782, 9783	H: 1.45m W: 0.41m	Not identified	Red
Yurre (Ihurre) (four wings)	Basque Country	c.1300–1350		H: 1.73 m W: 1.91 m	Not identified	Red (with secondary stencils)

Chiale altarpiece (four wings)	Castile-León	c.1300–1350	Killua Castle, Ireland		Not identified	Half-wings: figures (St Paul and maybe St Peter?). Side- wings: orange dots on red background
Marès I altarpiece (one wing)	Castile-León	c.1300	Museu Frederic Marès, Barcelona MFMB 2225	H: 1.66 m W: 0.70 m	Not identified	Lost (traces of red)
Marès II altarpiece (one wing)	Castile-León	c.1300–1350	Museu Frederic Marès, Barcelona MFMB 711	H: 1.44 m W: 0.45 m	Not identified	Dark grey-blue (fragmented)
Wildenstein altarpiece (three wings)	Castile-León	c.1275–1300	Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters, New York 55.62a-b, 1977.94	H: 1.05 m W: 0.41/0.39 m	Not identified	Painted figures (Passion of Christ), red, green and blue on a yellow and black background

12. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andersen, E., 2015: “Madonna Tabernacles in Scandinavia c. 1150–c. 1350”, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 168/1, pp. 165–185.
- Baetjer, K., 1995: *European Paintings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art by Artists Born before 1865: A Summary Catalogue*, New York.
- Binski, P. & Sauerberg, M. L., 2006 “Matthew Paris in Norway”, in J. Nadolny *et alii*, eds, *Medieval Painting in Northern Europe: Techniques, Analysis, Art History. Studies in Commemoration of the 70th Birthday of Unn Plahter*, London, pp. 230–147.
- Blindheim, M., 1993: “En romansk alterskapsdør. Et løst identifikasjonsproblem”, in *Det ikonografiske blik. Festskrift til Ulla Haastrup*, Copenhagen, pp. 19–26.
- , 1998: *Painted Wooden Sculpture in Norway c. 1100–1250*, Oslo.
- , 2004: *Gothic Painted Wooden Sculpture in Norway 1220–1350*, Oslo.

- Blix, P., 1895: *Nogle undersøgelser i Borgund og Urnes kirker*, Kristiania [Oslo].
- Braun, J., 1924: *Die liturgischen Paramente in Gegenwart und Vergangenheit. Ein Handbuch der Paramentik*, 2nd ed., Freiburg im Breisgau.
- Buran, D. & Müllerová, K., eds, 2008: *Slovak National Gallery: III Works of Art from the Collections*, exhibition catalogue, Bratislava.
- Dobrzeńiecki, T., 1977: *Catalogue of the Mediaeval Painting*, Warsaw.
- Hotchin, J., 2018: "In Memory of Our Sorrow: Lenten Veils and Emotions", in *Histories of Emotion: From Medieval Europe to Contemporary Australia*. URL: https://historiesofemotion.com/2018/04/01/in-memory-of-our-sorrow-lenten-veils-and-emotions/#_edn2
- Gutiérrez Baños, F., 2018: "Pasear entre ruinas: retablos-tabernáculo castellanos de la Baja Edad Media", *BSAA arte*, 84, pp. 41–83.
- Kaspersen, S., 2003: "Altertavlerne i deres kirkelig-liturgiske og andagtsmæssige kontekst", in S. F. Plahthe & J. Bruun, eds, *Middelalderlige altertavler i Haderslev Stift*, Hellebæk, pp. 39–41.
- Kollandsrud, K., 2018: *Evoking the Divine. The Visual Vocabulary of Sacred Polychrome Wooden Sculpture in Norway between 1100 and 1350*, Ph.D. diss., Universitetet i Oslo.
- Lange, B. C., 1994: "Madonnaskap med kirkemodell som baldakinbekroning med efterskrift av Jan Svanberg", *Foreningen til norske Fortidsminde-merkers Bevaring Årbok*, 148, pp. 23–36.
- Melero Moneo, M.^a L., 1991: "433.- Retaule (fragment)", in *Catàleg d'escultura i pintura medievals* (=catalogue Museu Frederic Marès), Barcelona, pp. 432–433.
- Mor, L., 2016: "Retablo a portelle castigliano – Shrine Castilian Retable", in *Alpha – Omega: A Collection of Works of Art* (=catalogue Chiale Fine Art), Racconigi and Paris, pp. 44–53.
- Neale, J. M. & Webb, B. (eds), 1893: *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the Rationale divinarum officiorum Written by William Durandus, Sometime Bishop of Mende*, New York. URL: <https://archive.org/details/symbolismofchurcoodura/page/n7/mode/2up>
- Norberg, R., 1969: "Retabel", in A. Karker, ed., *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder*, t. 14, Copenhagen, cols 80–89.
- Plahter, U. et alii, 2004: *Painted Altar Frontals of Norway 1250–1350*, vol. 3: *Illustrations and Drawings*, London.
- Ratkowska, P., 1970: "The Remains of an Altarpiece with the Legend of St John the Baptist: An Unpublished Work of the Franco-Gothic Style in the National Museum in Warsaw", *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie*, 11/1, pp. 1–18.

- Rossetti Brezzi, E., 2001: “L’età gotica: il caso della Valle d’Aosta. La scultura lignea dipinta”, in *Tra Gotico e Rinascimento. Scultura in Piemonte*, exhibition catalogue, Turin, pp. 20–48.
- Smith, M. T., 1959: “The Use of Grisaille as a Lenten Observance,” *Marsyas*, 8, pp. 43–54.
- Stein, M., 2010: “Madonnaskapene i Hedalen og Reinli stavkirker. Forslag til rekonstruksjon av skapenes opprinnelige utseende”, *Collegium Medievale*, 23, pp. 58–91.
- Wallem, F. B., 1910: “De islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen”, in *Foreningen til norske fortidsmindemerkens bevaring Aarsberetning 1909*, pp. 1–64.

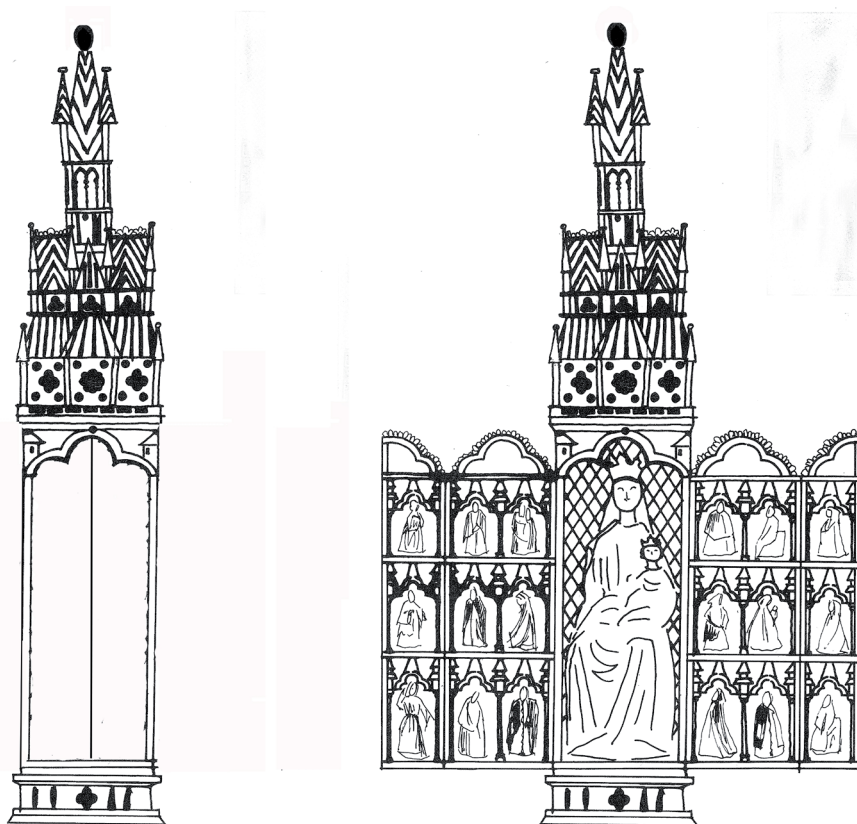


Fig. 1. Tabernacle in closed and opened position.
Drawings by S. Holm, edited by E. Andersen.



Fig. 2. Left: Madonna tabernacle in Kumlinge, Finland. Only the four wings and the reliefs on them are original from the thirteenth century (the interior has been overpainted). Right: Detail of the beautifully carved relief of the Visitation, from the lower right half-wing.
Photo: F. Berg.



Fig. 3. St Peter on the exterior of the left side-wing of the tabernacle from Fåberg, Norway.
Photo: Kulturhistorisk museum, Universitetet i Oslo.



Fig. 4. Details of St Paul (left) and St Peter (right)
on the exterior of the half-wings from the Arana I tabernacle, Spain.
Photo: Centro de Conservación y Restauración de Bienes Culturales de Castilla y León.



Fig. 5. St Paul on the exterior of the right half-wing
of a Madonna tabernacle from Spain (called 'Chiale altarpiece').
Photo: Killua Castle, Ireland.



Fig. 6. Left: St John. Detail from the exterior of the left side-wing from Arana I, Spain.
Photo: Centro de Conservación y Restauración de Bienes Culturales de Castilla y León.
Right: St John (?). Detail from the exterior of the left side-wing from Urnes, Norway.
Photo: E. Andersen.



Fig. 7. Wings of a tabernacle from the region of Castile-León, Spain (called 'Wildenstein altarpiece') with painted scenes on the exterior (New York, Cloisters Museum). Photo: F. Berg.



Fig. 8. Left: The overpainted interior of the Hedalen tabernacle.
Right: The exterior of the Hedalen tabernacle.
Photo: B. Lindstad.



Fig. 9. Left: The overpainted interior of the Reinli tabernacle.
Right: The exterior of the Reinli tabernacle.
Photo: M. Pettersen, Riksantikvaren.

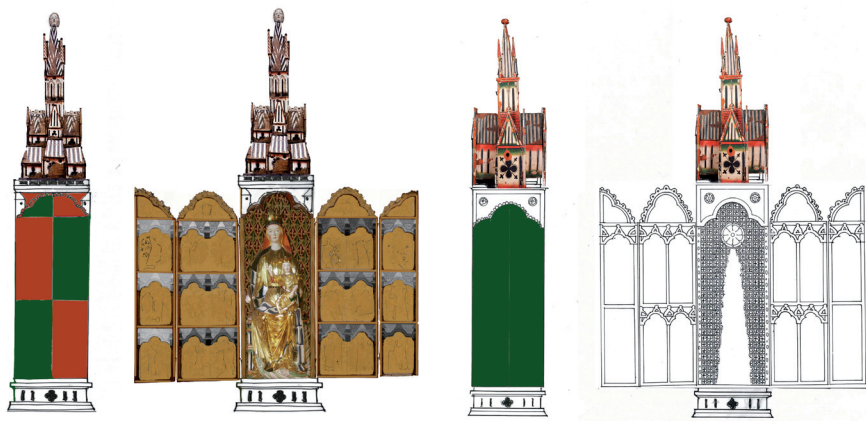


Fig. 10. Left and left-center: Reconstruction of the Madonna tabernacle from Hedalen in closed and open positions. Right-center and right: Reconstruction of the Madonna tabernacle from Reinli in closed and open positions. Based on M. Stein. Drawings by O. Storsletten, digitised by E. Andersen.



Fig. 11. Left: Fröskog tabernacle with (probably) secondary foliage decoration. Center: Östra Vram tabernacle. Photo: F. Berg. Right: Exterior of the four wings from the Vallbona de les Monges tabernacle (Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya). Photo: Calveras/Mérida/Sagristà.



Fig. 12. Left: Castildelgado tabernacle, Spain (Barcelona, Museu Frederic Marès).

Photo: Museu Frederic Marès, Institut de Cultura, Ajuntament de Barcelona.

Center: Norra Ny tabernacle, Sweden.

Right: Urjala tabernacle, Finland.

Photo: F. Berg.



Fig. 13. Left: Tabernacle wing from Røldal I.
Right: Tabernacle wing from Røldal II.
To the left the interior and to the right the exterior.
Photo: Univeristetsmuseet i Bergen.



Fig. 14. Left: Exterior of the tabernacle from Nässinge, Sweden.
Photo: Göteborgs Stadsmuseum.
Right: Exterior of the tabernacle from Yurre, Spain.
Photo: E. Andersen.



Fig. 15. Left: Jällby, Sweden. Center: Kumlinge, Finland.
Right: the so-called 'Marès I altarpiece' (Barcelona, Museu Frederic Marès).
Photo: F. Berg.



Fig. 16. Left: One of the two wings from Svinhult, Sweden, interior and exterior.

Photo: F. Berg.

Right: Tabernacle from Vojňany, Slovakia.

Photo: Slovak National Gallery.



Fig. 17. Tabernacles housing saints. Left: Dädesjö, Sweden.

Center left: Östra Vram, Sweden.

Center right: Edestad, Sweden.

Right: Santa Maria de Cap d'Aran, Spain.

Photo: F. Berg.



Fig. 18. The *Narbonne Altar Cloth* (Paris, Musée du Louvre).
Lenten cloth made for Charles V in 1364.
Photo: Musée du Louvre.



Fig. 19. The scenes of the *Narbonne Altar Cloth* and a tabernacle from the region of Castile-León, Spain (called 'Wildenstein altarpiece').



Fig 20. Norra Fågelås, c. 1400, in open (left: seen from the front; center left and center right: seen from the sides) and closed positions (Stockholm, Historiska Museet).

Photo: F. Berg.



Fig. 21.
Madonna tabernacle
in Jällby Church,
Sweden.
Photo: E. Andersen.